UNITED NATIONS **ST**

Secretariat

ST/IC/1997/78
21 November 1997

INFORMATION CIRCULAR*

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING AT HEADQUARTERS - 1998 PROGRAMME

1. Language training courses in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are organized in order to promote linguistic balance and multilingualism within the Secretariat and to improve the language capabilities of its staff as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2480 B (XXIII) of 21 December 1968, 43/224 D of 21 December 1988 and 50/11 of 2 November 1995. The purpose of the courses is to provide staff members with the opportunity to learn and use in their work the official languages of the Organization. To enhance further staff members' abilities to perform their jobs with greater competence and to develop their linguistic skills for their professional development, special advanced courses are offered in active listening and pronunciation skills as well as communication skills courses, such as drafting and presentation skills.

2. The purpose of the present circular is to advise staff members of the registration dates and schedules for the United Nations Language and Communication Skills Training Programme at Headquarters.

I. 1998 COURSE CALENDAR

3. The 1998 course calendar is as follows:

(a) January 1998 term

Language classes:	5 January-27 March
End-of-term examinations:	30 March-3 April

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 1998.

(b) April 1998 term

Language classes:	20 April-10 July
End-of-term examinations:	13-17 July

(c) September 1998 term

Language classes:	14 September-4 December
End-of-term examinations:	7-11 December

II. REGISTRATION SCHEDULE

4. The registration schedule for language and communications courses is as follows:

(a) Registration for January 1998 term

3-14 November 1997

(b) Registration for April 1998 term

23 February-6 March 1998

(c) Registration for September 1998 term

8-19 June 1998
31 August-4 September 1998

(d) Registration for January 1999 term

2-13 November 1998

Registration procedure

5. (a) New participants may register for a language course by filling out a registration form, which may be obtained from the Language and Communications Skills Training Programme, room S-606, during the established registration period between 1 and 3 p.m., and returning it to the same room before the published deadline. Those who have some prior knowledge of the language they wish to study must make an appointment for a placement test when they register;

(b) Once registered, participants will be given an opportunity in class before the end-of-term examination to renew their registration for regular courses in subsequent terms. Participants are advised that if they fail to re-register at that time they will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted a written explanation of their special circumstances to the appropriate language coordinator;

(c) All those who wish to participate in conversation classes or special courses, such as the advanced reading workshops, the pronunciation workshops or communication skills courses must fill out the appropriate form, which may be obtained in room S-606 during the registration period;

(d) Returning participants who have been absent from a course of study for two terms or more will be required to take a placement test in order to re-enrol in the programme.

Language of study

6. Prospective participants are advised to exercise particular care in choosing the language in which they wish to take either a regular or an accelerated course, for they may register for only one such course each term and may not interrupt a course of study in one language in order to begin studying another without the authorization of the Staff Development and Learning Service. Students in the programme must write to the Training Officer in charge of Language Training to request such a change.

Notification of enrolment

7. Staff members and other participants whose registration is current or who have registered within the established registration period should check the class lists, which will be posted on the sixth floor of the Secretariat building in the SA-B classroom area and on the second floor of the UNDC-2 building during the week before the beginning of each term.

Cancellation of registration

8. Participants who believe that they will be unable to complete the course in which they are enrolled and wish to withdraw must do so by completing the change-of-registration form in room S-606 between 1 and 3 p.m. within the first two weeks of the term. If these students wish to re-register for the same course in a subsequent term, they must come in person to room S-606 during the announced registration period to complete the necessary registration forms. Those paying participants who cancel their registration after this two-week period will be considered participants for the term, and will be charged the full fee for each course in which they have registered (i.e., no tuition fees are refunded after the second week of classes). Further, they will be treated as a repeater when they re-register for the same course in a subsequent term.

III. LANGUAGE TRAINING

9. Four types of language training courses are offered each term: regular, accelerated, conversation and specialized courses. In addition, the Staff Development and Learning Service also designs and conducts special job-related language training courses to meet specific language needs at the request of departments.

Regular courses

10. (a) Regular courses meet for one-hour periods, three or four times a week, depending on the level;

(b) Classes are offered at the following times:

Before work: 8.30 a.m.

Lunch hour: 12 p.m.
1 p.m.
2 p.m.

After work: 5.45 p.m. (6.15 p.m. during the General Assembly session)

11. Not all levels of a given language are offered at each of these times. Draft schedules, posted in room S-606, should be consulted at the time of registration. Every effort will be made to place registrants according to the time preferences they indicate; however, because the number of places in lunch-hour courses is limited, there is no guarantee that registrants will be given the time they have chosen.

Accelerated courses

12. Accelerated courses are offered as an intensive alternative to the regular programme. Classes meet five days a week from 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. Written authorization is required for staff members wishing to take such courses. The authorization must be renewed each time the staff member re-registers for an accelerated course.

Conversation courses

13. Conversation courses are provided for staff members who have passed the language proficiency examination or who have a sufficiently advanced knowledge of the language. Those enrolled in the upper four levels of a language programme are also eligible to participate. The purpose of the courses is to develop oral expression and to supplement the instruction provided in the other courses. Conversation classes meet two hours a week.

Specialized courses

14. Specialized language workshops in a variety of language skill areas are offered; advanced reading, listening and pronunciation skills workshops are available. The workshops allow participants to focus on and improve their abilities in specific skill areas. At the time of registration, participants may check which workshops are available in the language they wish to study.

IV. COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

15. To address the needs of the Organization for staff members to develop their communications skills for work-related purposes, training courses have been developed as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources (A/C.5/51/1).

16. The writing training component of communications skills training addresses the need to improve the drafting skills of staff members whose functions require them to draft in a working language of the Organization. Writing workshops, which include courses in expository writing, drafting letters and memoranda (English and French), and report writing generally meet from 3 to 5 p.m., one day a week.

17. Staff are requested to consult the Staff Development Programme booklet, copies of which are available in room S-606, for a description of these courses.

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Self-study and resource centre

18. The Staff Development and Learning Service operates a self-study and resource centre (UNDC-2, room 203), consisting of a resource centre and a multi-media laboratory for individual study. The self-study centre offers audio and video materials, and computer software and CD-ROM, as well as other language training manuals which are geared to the further development of acquired linguistic skills for United Nations-related purposes. Some communications skills self-study materials are also available.

19. The hours during which the self-study and resource centre are open are posted on the bulletin boards on the second floor of the UNDC-2 building and the sixth floor of the Secretariat at the beginning of each term. The self-study centre will also be open before and after working hours during the term so that staff can avail themselves of this resource on their own time.

Lunch-hour attendance of language courses

20. Supervisors are requested to permit staff members attending classes during their lunch hour 20 minutes for a quick meal before resuming their work.

Absenteeism

21. Participants are advised that those who fail to attend class during the first week of the term will automatically be dropped from the class list and their places may be allotted to persons on the waiting list unless they have informed the language coordinator in writing. Absences from class during the term should be explained in writing to the appropriate language coordinator.

Course materials

22. Participants will be informed on the first day of class of the materials that will be used during the course. It should be noted that course materials produced by the Staff Development and Learning Service are intended for use exclusively by participants in the language courses offered by that Service.

End-of-term examinations

23. (a) Examination schedules are posted during the last month of classes. Participants are advised that examinations are an integral part of the teaching

programme, and it is mandatory to take them. Participants who do not sit for the end-of-term examination will be dropped from the programme unless they have submitted adequate written explanation to the appropriate coordinator in advance of their absence;

(b) Examinations are given after the last week of classes for regular and accelerated courses to determine whether a participant will pass to a higher level or repeat the course. The examinations consist of written and oral components, both of which must be passed to enable a participant to go on to the next level. Participants who fail a course may arrange to have a general discussion of the results of their examination by making an appointment with the appropriate language coordinator one week after the beginning of a term;

(c) Participants who are prevented by compelling circumstances from taking the examination as scheduled and who wish to request a make-up examination must write a memorandum to the coordinator of the language they are studying.

Language proficiency examination

24. The United Nations language proficiency examination is the official test of a staff member's knowledge of a language and may be taken both by participants who have completed the last level of a language course and by staff members who have achieved proficiency from outside sources. The language proficiency examination will be given on 3 and 4 February 1998 and 26 and 27 May 1998. Application to take the examination must be made separately. Further details are set out in the information circular on the 1998 language proficiency examinations (ST/IC/1997/53). There are no make-up examinations for the language proficiency examination.

VI. INQUIRIES

25. The information desk in the Secretariat building room S-606 is open from 1 to 3 p.m. on weekdays for inquiries.

26. Telephone numbers to call for information:

Information desk: 963-7056

Self-study and resource centre: 963-2482

Language proficiency examinations: 963-9503

Pedagogical inquiries and appointments with language coordinators and head teachers:

Arabic: 963-9506

Chinese: 963-2481

English: 963-7027

French: 963-7019 and 963-5153

Russian: 963-7063

Spanish: 963-7026

Teachers' room 1B-24: 963-5155

Teachers' room DC-2-201: 963-2480

Fax machine number for Language and Communications Training Programme office, room S-606: 963-6016

Staff members who wish to consult a language coordinator or head teacher should telephone in advance to make an appointment.

27. Pending preparation and issuance of an administrative instruction conforming to the provisions of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1 on the rules and procedures governing eligibility and tuition fees for the Language and Communication Skills Training Programme, staff members are requested to consult information circular ST/IC/1996/2 of 9 January 1996, copies of which can be obtained in room S-606.